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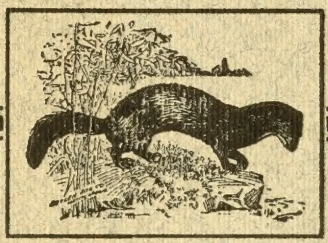
# MINK FARMING

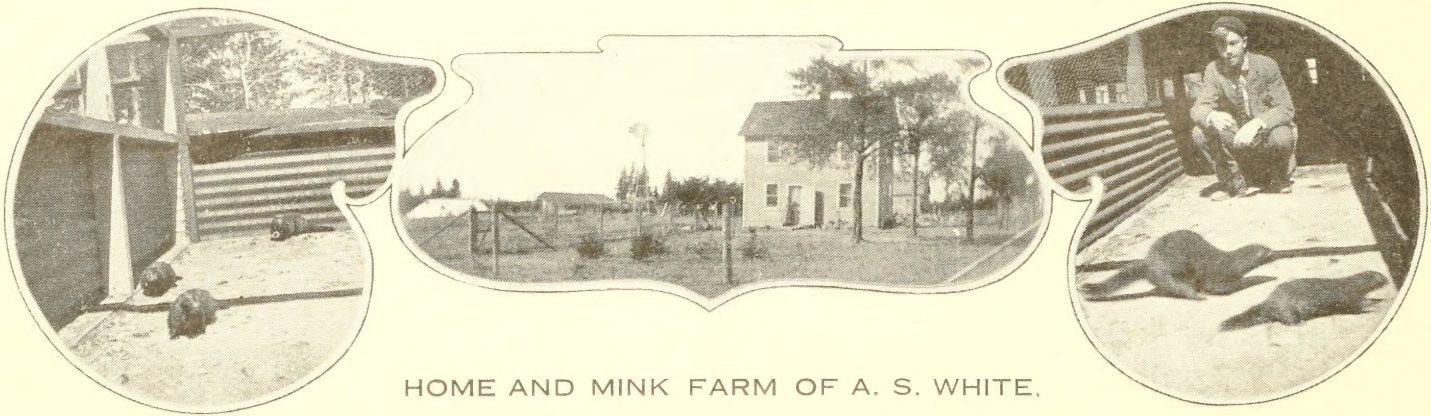


## How to Start
## Buildings
## Care and Feed
## And Its Possibilities

As learned by years of experience while actually engaged in the business.

.... BY ....

A. S. WHITE



HOME AND MINK FARM OF A. S. WHITE,
AUTHOR OF THIS BOOKLET AT
PINE RIVER, MINN.

# MINK FARMING

## How to Start
## Buildings
## Care and Feed
## And Its Possibilities

By A. S. WHITE

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## FOREWORD.

In preparing this booklet it is my desire to cover as far as possible all the knowledge I have acquired during several years of actual mink farming. It is written for the benefit of the beginner, and if the information and directions herein contained are closely followed, it will enable anyone to start and maintain a mink farm, either in a large or small way, with a very fair chance of success.

It is not a large volume filled with cuts and pictures of the various animals which some fellow "THINKS" might be successfully raised or propagated. Such a book would help the prospective beginner in mink farming very little.

At the time I started in the business I was unable to find anything printed on the subject, so had to rely upon experience as my teacher. The result was numerous mistakes—costly, too—which had to be corrected year by year, the greatest cost being valuable time wasted.

I now offer you in this effort the facts connected with mink farming as learned by myself during several years of experience in the business. What I offer you is the plans and methods I am using today in my own yards, and while there may be room for much improvement on my present system, I can assure you that I am having very good success with my mink, and by following these pages closely you should do just as well.

—THE AUTHOR.



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## HOW TO START A MINK FARM.

To begin with, the person who expects to make a success in this, as well as any other business, must be adapted to the kind of work to be done. That is, if you want to raise mink, you must LIKE MINK. You must take a delight in caring for them—you must find the "company" agreeable to you. You must study them and their ways, and until you have learned from personal experience of some better way, you should follow closely the instructions given in the following pages.

Having decided that we must and do meet the above requirements we are ready for the next step, which, naturally, is a location. This may be a city home with a vacant lot, it may be a vacant piece of ground on the farm, or it may be back in the woods miles from a town or railroad on some lake or stream (my own place is located on DRY ground just outside the village of Pine River, Minn.) My water supply is furnished by a windmill, as shown later.

Having selected your piece of ground, you are ready to build, and the diagram given will explain fully just how to go about it.

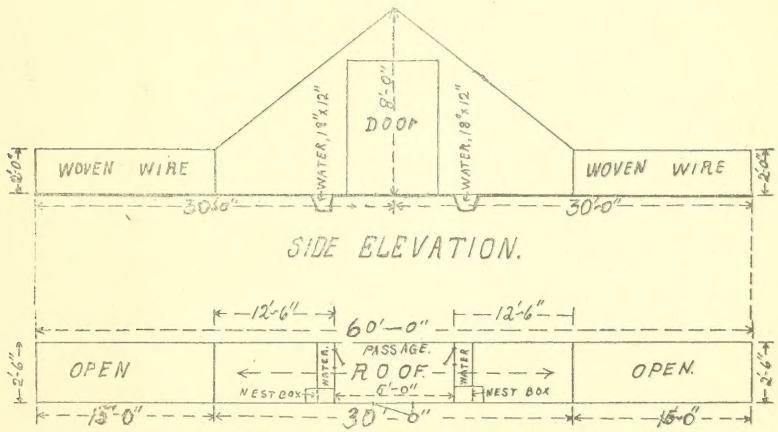


Fig. 1.

## DESCRIPTION AND SPECIFICATIONS OF FIGURE 1.

Figure No. 1 shows two pens thirty feet by two and one-half feet, built end to end under one roof which affords a wider passageway than if they were built side by side.

One pen, or the part on one side of the center line of the passageway is thirty feet by two and one-half feet, and will accommodate five mink—one female and young. It is constructed of galvanized sheet iron, inch mesh woven wire netting, concrete, and lumber of two by four inch dimensions for the frame. By referring to the diagram it will be seen that part of the pen—fifteen feet of the thirty feet—is under a roof, the remaining fifteen feet being left open with a wire netting top.

Under the roof at one end of the pen is a trench eighteen inches by twenty inches which is lined with cement for water. If several pens are built side by side they may be separated where the trench passes from one pen to another by three-eighths inch iron rods or bars placed one inch apart and imbedded in the cement in the bottom of the trench while the cement is still green (soft).

The floors of the pens are constructed of concrete three inches thick. The frames are constructed the same as for a house of two by four lumber, and the one inch mesh wire netting stretched tightly upon it. For the sides it will require wire netting of the same one inch mesh, which comes in stock form two feet wide. But in case several pens are being built side by side they should be partitioned with a strip the entire height of the pen of galvanized iron. This prevents the mink from fighting, which they would do if the wire netting was all that separated them. The partition of sheet iron extends under the roof to the passageway, meeting it at right angles and reaching to the roof.

The passageway may or may not have a concrete floor, as it is not absolutely necessary. The building is constructed entirely of galvanized sheet iron placed over a wood frame which is constructed of two by four lumber.

The material required for building a set of pens as the illustration shows in Figure 1 would be: 250 feet of two by four lumber for framing; four cubic feet of concrete; sixty-five feet of woven wire two feet in width for sides; and thirty-eight feet of five foot wire netting for the open part of the top of the pens, and also for the partition between the pens and the passageway. (This will have to be split in two parts two and one-half feet wide if only one pair of pens are built, but if two pens are constructed side by side it will be just right for two pens without splitting.

This allows for the small doors which are built in the wire partitions in the passageway, through which the pens may be entered.

For the roofing and sheeting up of the building it will require 385 square feet of galvanized sheet iron. Including nails, staples, hooks and hinges, etc., for doors, these are all the materials required.

These are the kind of pens I have had the best success with, and are the cheapest and best I can recommend at this time. The plan gives a diagram of one pen two and one-half feet by thirty feet, which is right for one female and her young until weaned. Then you can keep five or less

animals in it until sold or until you require the pen again for a breeding pen. You can build two or more of these pens together, according to the size of plant you require, the more pens built at the one time the cheaper they can be put up.

Regarding cost, it would be difficult to state what the cost per pen would be in different parts of the country. I can only state that my own cost me for work and material on each pen two and one-half by thirty feet about $25.00 for each pen. But one thing is certain, they will last for many years, and I am always sure when I put an animal in one of them I will find him there when I look for him again. It will not pay you to build in any other way except the best, as you run too much risk of losing your stock, and besides the cheap way is always the more expensive in the end. Remember, you are engaging in a businss for a term of years, not days, and you will have other things to do besides repairing pens that prove defective.

Having gotten thus far along with your work you should solve the question of getting your first stock. It is generally a good idea to start looking them up as soon as you decide to go into the business. It will not be an easy matter to secure them. If you live in the country where mink are natives you might build some box traps as shown herewith, and capture your start.

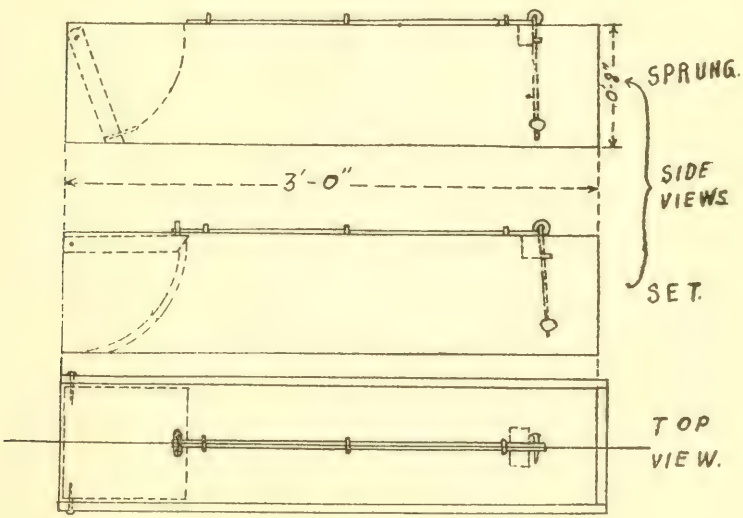



Fig. 2. BOX TRAP.

This method at best will probably take you a long time, as mink are getting very scarce all over the country, but you doubtless could get started in this way if you live in a country where there are wild mink. If not, you will have to buy your stock from someone who is already in the business. An advertisement in most any of the out-door magazines will put you in touch with the few "ranchers" who have a few animals for sale each year. Get in touch with them at the earliest possible date and place your order so that you will not be disappointed when shipping time comes, for remember, if you fail to get your animals this fall it means the loss of a whole year, and besides the price of live mink is rapidly advancing.

If you are not acquainted with any publication of the kind wanted I might state that The Hunter-Trader-Trapper published at Columbus, Ohio, or Fur News Magazine, 71 West 23rd Street, New York City, will answer your purpose very well. There are many other publications of this same nature that would do. Your greatest trouble will be in getting your stock to start with.

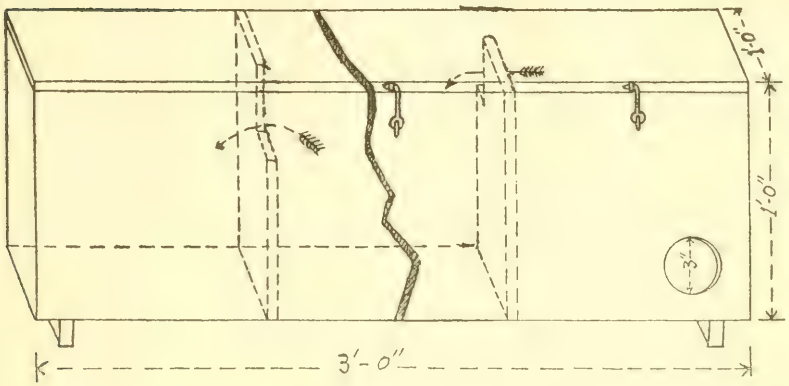
After you have secured your stock you are ready for the feed problem, which while very important is very simple. One quarter pound of fresh meat (pork excluded) is what I feed the year round. I get my supply from the woods in the form of wild rabbits which are very plentiful here. Fish may also be used at times but will not do as a steady food. With the mother mink I also feed fresh milk twice a day besides the meat after the young are born and until they are weaned.

Give them fresh water each day and keep the pens clean, and also the nest boxes should be dry and clean. The boxes and pens should be cleaned thoroughly once a week in summer time but once a month in the cold weather is sufficient.

A word about nest boxes. They should be constructed of one-inch boards, twelve by twelve by thirty-six inches and divided into three compartments as shown in the illustration herewith. This gives your mink a good, *dark* home, which is very important, particularly so with the females when the young are born.

Fig. 3.

TRIPLE-SECTION NEST-BOX.




The nest should be as near perfectly dark as possible and you should not under any consideration open the nest box or handle the young mink until they come out of their home of their own free will. This will occur when they are about four weeks old. I have had cases where they did not come out until they were six weeks old. Let them alone but feed the mother *all she will eat*—not any more—twice a day. But don't let her impose upon you. She will carry everything you give her into the nest box and if too much meat is given you will have trouble on this account. She cannot eat more than one-quarter of a pound of fresh meat twice a day with what fresh milk she wants. Sometimes it happens that a mink will not touch the milk at all and will eat as much as half a pound of meat at a feed. The person will have to use his own judgment in the matter of feeding as no fixed rule will apply in all cases. Should you find that a nest box is becoming foul after the young are born and before they come out of the nest, you should place a fresh nest box in the pen and leave it to the mother mink to make the change if she so desires. If she does not, let her alone. Don't force the change upon her, for nine times out of ten she will destroy her young ones if you do. If she makes the move herself, you can then quietly remove the old nest box from the pen.

As stated heretofore, when the young ones are from four to six weeks old they will come out of the nest box and spend most of the time in the

open pen. They will eat a little at this age, but when eight weeks old should be eating well. Watch them closely at this time. The mother will be trying to wean them and she will have a hard time without your assistance, which you should extend in all cases. As soon as the young ones are eating well you should take them away from the mother, and when doing this always sort them, putting the males in yards by themselves and the females likewise. This will save you a lot of trouble later on in telling what sex your mink are as it is not easy to handle them after they are grown. In handling them at weaning time put on a pair of heavy leather gloves and they cannot hurt you in the least. They will make an awful fuss but go right ahead with your work. It is sometimes policy to leave one female "kit" in the pen with her mother when the others are taken away. This takes care of whatever milk she may have left and prevents her from being restless as well.

## THE BREEDING SEASON.

Mink breed in most states of the Union from March first to April first. In my yards I place the male and female together about the first of March and leave them together until the fifteenth of April. (Use box traps for moving grown mink from one pen to another.) If you have more females than males you can put as many as five females with one male, but I prefer to mate them in pairs for the reason that the females will generally fight each other when bunched with the male, in which case you will have to separate them as they are likely to cause you the loss of an animal or two. They are very wicked fighters and do not know when to quit. I have also tried placing one female in a pen with a male and leaving her a day or so, or until I was satisfied that she could be safely removed to a pen by herself. This plan works out all right but I do not advise it unless you are short of males as it makes it necessary to handle your mink too much, and at that, it is not as sure as leaving them together a month. They will breed at one year old and for young stock I advise to use male and female of the same age. Never put two males in the same pen at this season of the year for they surely will fight to the death.

After you have returned your females to their separate pens (April 15) leave the males in pens singly by themselves and everything will run along very quietly for exactly forty-two days. Then the young mink will make their appearance. You will know this by the "small voices" coming from the nest boxes. They usually keep up a constant "crying" for several days, but don't get the impression that there is something the matter with them and try to remedy the matter by opening the nest boxes or by disturbing them in any other way. The proper thing to do is to keep away from them as much as possible, going to the pen only twice a day to feed the old mink.

Let me make it emphatic. Do not molest them under any circumstances. If you do the mothers will invaribly kill and eat their young.

This one item cost me my young mink and two years' time before I was satisfied as to the cause, and my advice should save anyone who reads this booklet much valuable time and much money should they ever engage in the mink raising business.

My experience has been that mink will breed only once a year as above stated. I have tried to get fall litters but without success, which convinces me beyond any question of a doubt that they will breed in the spring only.

The number of young in a litter is from four to eight as experienced in my yards, and five is about the average.

## MORE ABOUT YARDS AND BUILDINGS.

The plans as shown on previous pages are the ones in actual use on my place and I must say they are quite satisfactory. Still I submit below a plan for building upon running water which I believe would prove very satisfactory, and if anything, better than the dry land plan that I have in use. Still, I have never tried it myself nor do I know of anyone else who is using it. There might be several things to overcome in the use of such a plan that I have overlooked. However, I submit it for your consideration.

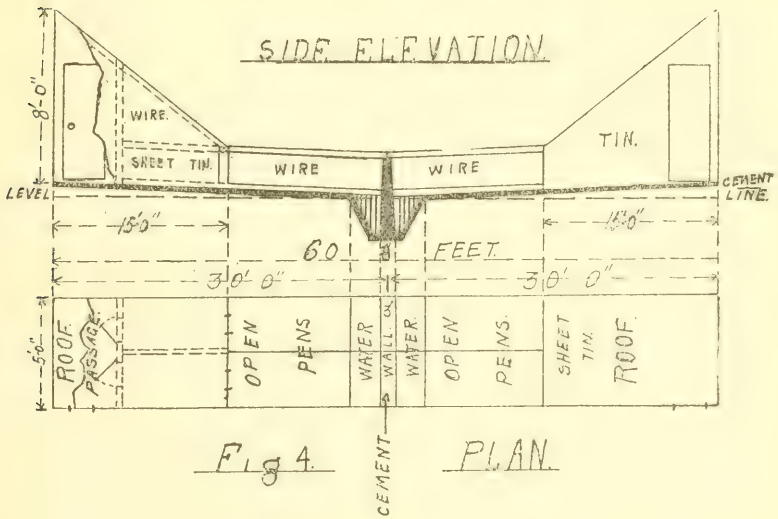



Fig 4.

## SHIPPING BOXES.

I herewith give an illustration of the standard shipping box which I have used and found very satisfactory. I have delivered animals in first-

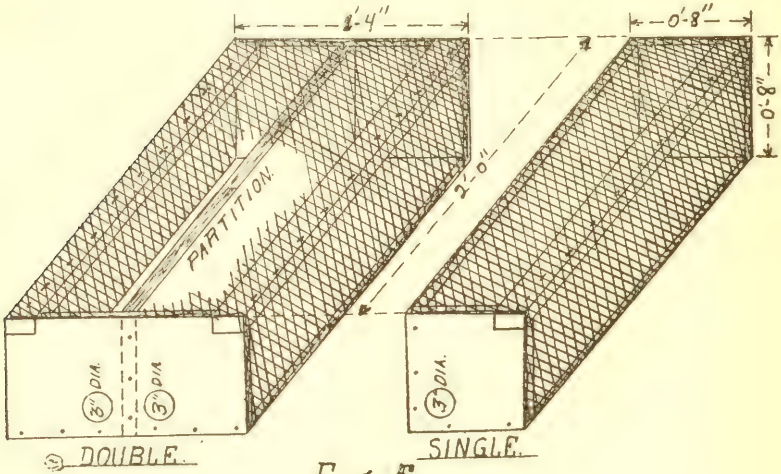



Fig. 5.

SHIPPING BOXES.

class condition where they were eight days and eight nights on the road, using the plan as shown herewith.

## GOOD LOCATIONS TO START.

In speaking of locations, it might be of interest to some to learn that the State of Minnesota (central and northern parts) furnishes hundreds of ideal spots for locating a "fur farm." The country, with its hundreds of beautiful lakes and streams of pure running water makes it a more than ideal for this business, as well as for diversified farming and stock raising. Land is cheap and within the reach of limited means. Game of all kinds as well as fish abound in plenty. You are also far enough north to give you the very best of fur—a very important item in fur farming.

Should any reader of this booklet feel interested in locating in this part of Minnesota, just write me, stating as near as possible just what you may want, and I will be glad to take the matter up with you with land men here and let you know what we can do for you. In all cases address, A. S. White, Pine River, Minnesota.

## THE POSSIBILITIES OF MINK FARMING.

In speaking of the possibilities of mink farming from the dollar and cents point of view many things might be stated, all of which might be true. I might go ahead and show figures how after a certain number of years the person who engaged in the business, starting with a certain number of animals, with a certain average increase each year, would be worth a large sum of money. This, I believe, has already been done with chickens, Belgian hares, etc. Also I believe the rule has been applied to mink farming by some enterprising parties in one of our large western cities.

But it is not my purpose to present any such picture to you. Mink farming, as in any other kind of stock raising, depends largely upon the man in charge. He is sure to meet with some reverses. You cannot raise every young mink that is born and sell it at a certain price any more than you can raise every pig, calf, lamb or colt. However, your losses should not be in any greater proportion than in that of any of the stock mentioned, and there is without doubt a very ready sale at present for all the live mink that can be raised. Also a ready market for fur hides at very good prices.

We can only speculate as to what future demands for live mink and mink fur will be. But taking into consideration the fact that the live wild supply is rapidly becoming very scarce we have no reason to suppose that the demand will grow less. On the contrary we have every reason to believe that the demand will be greater and that prices will advance very materially. This being the case I feel sure that anyone may engage in mink farming with as much assurance that there will be a steady market as he could in any other branch of stock raising.

We might go into the detail of profits and show you where a mink which costs you something like fifty cents to raise meets with a ready sale at the present price of $30.00 During the past season—1912—I sold for $50.00 per pair or $20.00 for males and $30.00 for females, and I had to return a great many orders unfilled on account of having not enough animals to supply the demand.

This would look like a get-rich-quick scheme but it is not my desire to present it to you in any such manner. What I am willing to state is this, namely: You can make a better percentage of profit out of raising mink than you can out of any other kind of farm stock, and barring black or silver fox, any other kind of fur bearing animal.

Large fortunes are being invested in fox farm ventures at this time, but it requires a large amount of money to engage in the business—as high as $10,000.00 being paid for a single pair of black fox at the time of this writing.

Naturally this puts the opportunity for fox farming beyond the reach of most of us. Mink being the next best thing and within the reach of all it would seem that they are sure to receive their share of attention, thereby assuring a good market for live mink for stocking purposes for some time to come, at good prices.

One pertinent remark in closing. The successful mink farmer will have nothing to complain of, while the unsuccessful mink farmer will have only himself and no one else to blame for his failure.

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